

App. No. 09/927,096
Amendment Dated: June 14, 2006
Reply to Office Action of March 17, 2006

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims have been amended as set forth above. Applicants believe that the claims are allowable over the cited art. The specification has been amended as set forth above to correct a minor typographical error. No new matter has been added.

I. Removal of Reference

U.S. Patent No. 6,430,552 issued to Corston-Oliver (hereinafter "Corston-Oliver") was filed on December 24, 1998 and issued on August 6, 2002. The Corston-Oliver reference qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. 102(e). Application No. 09/927,096 and Patent No. 6,430,552 were, at the time the invention of Application No. 09/927,096 was made, owned by Microsoft Corporation located in Redmond, Washington. Accordingly, applicants request that the Corston-Oliver reference be removed from consideration in the rejection set forth in the current Office Action.

II. Rejection of Claims 1-3, 6-10, 13-16, 18-22, 24-29 and 31-36 Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1-3, 6-10, 13-16, 18-22, 24-29 and 31-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Publication No. 2002/0026443 A1 published to Chang et al. (hereinafter "Chang") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,327,590 issued to Chidlovskii et al. (hereinafter "Chidlovskii"). Applicants respectfully disagree with the rejection. There is no suggestion in either of the references that they may be combined in the manner propounded in the Office Action. Moreover, even if a suggestion did exist for argument purposes, the claims include elements not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references. Independent claim 1

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includes the following combination of elements that is not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references:

"a search engine manager configured to receive a search query from a client and to translate the search query to *a standard query, wherein the standard query is universally formatted for search engine wrappers*, and to *communicate the standard query from the search engine manager to a search engine wrapper*; and"

"the search engine wrapper being configured to translate the standard query to a native format query of a registered search engine associated with the search engine wrapper and to communicate the native format query to the registered search engine, the search engine wrapper being further configured to return results from the registered search engine to the search engine manager."

The Background of the present invention identifies at least one problem associated with the prior art as follows:

Meta searchers, most commonly associated with the WWW, are not actually search engines, but rather provide a common front end for multiple search engines. Meta searchers interact directly with a native interface to each of the multiple search engines, *making it impossible for other search engines to easily make their information available to the meta searcher. This limitation creates a barrier to adding additional search engines to the meta searcher.* Background, at page 1, lines 23-28. (Emphasis added)

The specification of the present invention identifies some solutions to the problem associated with querying multiple search engines (as follows):

The present invention overcomes the problems identified above by *providing a common interface with which one or more search engines may be queried through a common search client, and which allows various search engines to easily register with the common search client. Briefly stated, the search system provides a uniform wrapper that exposes a common interface to a search manager, and which interacts with a search engine through the search engine's native interface.* Through the use of many such uniform wrappers, an arbitrary number of search engines may "plug in" or be added to the system at any time, thereby extending the search capabilities of the search system with each new addition. Summary, at page 2, lines 5-13. (Emphasis added)

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Query generation module 244 is configured to *receive the query from the client interface 242, along with any additional information or limitations regarding the query, and build a standard query in a format understood the search engine wrappers* 230-236. The standard query is in a common format and includes sufficient information from the client's query to retrieve information related to the client's query from each of the registered search engines. *Specification*, at page 7, line 27-page 8, line 2. (Emphasis added)

Translation module 250 is configured to translate the standard query received at the manager interface 248 to the native format of the search engine supported by the wrapper 230, search engine 260 in this case. Each search engine wrapper includes a translation module 250 that translates the standard query into a query in the native format of the search engines 260-266 associated with that search engine wrapper 230-236. *In this way, the query originally generated by the client may be presented to each search engine in the native format of the search engine without undue modification to the search engine to receive many various forms of search query. Specification*, at page 8, lines 18-25. (Emphasis added)

Applicants assert that the cited art fails to teach or otherwise suggest the *combination* of elements recited in independent claim 1. Independent claim 1 recites the limitation that "wherein the standard query is universally formatted for search engine wrappers." Claim 1 continues by reciting that "the search engine wrapper being configured to translate the standard query to a native format query of a registered search engine associated with the search engine wrapper." Applicants can find no teaching in either of the references of these elements. Chang pertains to searching heterogeneous datastores using a federated datastore object. Applicants find no teaching in Chang of search engine wrappers let alone a standard query format that is universally formatted for search engine wrappers. Likewise, applicants assert that Chidlovskii does not remedy the lack of teaching in Chang. Chidlovskii teaches a metadata search engine for ranking documents. Yet, applicants can find no teaching in Chidlovskii of a search engine manager that is configured to convert a search query from a client into a standard query, wherein the standard

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query is universally formatted for search engine wrappers. Also, applicants can find no teaching in Chidlovskii of a search engine wrapper that is configured to translate the standard query to a native format query of a registered search engine associated with the search engine wrapper. Any assertion otherwise would require reading in elements into Chidlovskii that are not taught or suggested in either reference. Accordingly, applicants believe that claim 1 is allowable over the cited references.

Independent claim 7 includes the following combination of elements that are not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references:

"building a standard query from the search query, wherein the standard query is universally configured to be understandable by a plurality of engine wrappers; and"

"issuing the standard query to each of the plurality of search engine wrappers;"

"translating the standard query to a native format query for a search engine associated with the search engine wrapper; and"

Independent claim 7 includes some similar elements as recited above in claim 1.

Applicants rely on the arguments set forth above in support for claim 7.

Independent claim 13 includes the following combination of elements that is not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references:

"building a standard query from the client query received from the client, wherein the standard query is universally formatted for wrappers;"

"passing the standard query from the search engine manager to a wrapper associated with the registered search engine;"

"translating, at the wrapper, the standard query to a translated query in a native format of the registered search engine;"

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Independent claim 13 includes some similar elements as recited above in claim 1.

Applicants rely on the arguments set forth above in support for claim 13.

Independent claim 21 includes the following combination of elements that is not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references:

"building a standard query from the query initiated by the client, wherein the standard query is universally configured to be understandable by a plurality of engine wrappers;"

"transmitting the standard query to at least one search engine wrapper configured to translate the standard query to a native format query associated with the at least one search engine registered with the search system;"

Independent claim 21 includes some similar elements as recited above in claim 1.

Applicants rely on the arguments set forth above in support for claim 21.

Independent claim 29 includes the following combination of elements that is not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references:

"receiving a standard query from a search engine manager, wherein the standard query is universally configured to be understandable by a plurality of engine wrappers;"

"translating the standard query into a native format query associated with at least one search engine;"

Independent claim 29 includes some similar elements as recited above in claim 1.

Applicants rely on the arguments set forth above in support for claim 29.

With regard to dependent claims 2-3, 6, 9-10, 14-16, 18-20, 22, 24-28 and 31-36 applicants assert that those claims include elements that are not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references. Moreover, those claims ultimately depend from the independent claims recited above. In light of their dependence, applicants assert that those claims are allowable for at least the same reasons cited above for the independent claims.

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III. Rejection of Claims 4-5, 11-12, 17, 23 and 30 Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

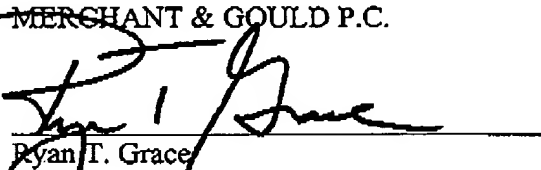
Claims 4-5, 11-12, 17, 23 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chang in view of Chidlovskii and further in view of Corston-Oliver. Applicants respectfully disagree with the rejection. Corston-Oliver has been removed as a reference as set forth above. Applicants assert that the references are not combinable in the manner suggested in the Office Action. Also, even if the references could be combined for argument purposes, the claims include elements that are not taught or otherwise suggested by the cited references. Moreover, the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejections set forth herein depends from the above 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection. Applicants believe that claims 1-3, 6-10, 13-16, 18-22, 24-29 and 31-36 are allowable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as set forth above. Accordingly, applicants believe that claims 4-5, 11-12, 17, 23 and 30 are also allowable.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all pending claims are believed to be allowable and the application is in condition for allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any further issues regarding this application, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned attorney for the applicant at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.


Ryan T. Grace
Registration No. 52,956
Direct Dial: 206.342.6258

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P. O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903
206.342.6200

